

General Filing Procedures

Records are filed in the Official Personnel Folder to document events in an individual's Federal employment history that have long-term consequences for the employee and the Government. Care should be exercised in filing documents correctly to ensure that all documents pertaining to an employee's rights and benefits are available in the personnel folder when needed. Agency approved forms as exceptions to Standard Forms, e.g. ES and CES 436's in lieu of the SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action, are filed in accordance with the filing instructions for the related Government wide forms.

Documents are filed in chronological order by effective date. File the document with the most recent effective date on top of the document with the earlier effective date. When forms have no effective date they are filed by the completion date, and if more than one form has the same effective date the forms are filed in any order within the effective date.

Personnel folder documents are either long-term or temporary documents. Certain document must never be filed in the personnel folder.

Long-term documents are records kept for the life of the folder, usually 115 years from the employee's date of birth. These documents are filed in chronological order on the right side of the personnel folder. Only documents authorized by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may be placed on the right side of the folder.

Temporary documents are documents that are not kept for the life of the personnel folder. These documents are filed on the left side of the folder.

Prohibited document are records that must never be placed in a personnel folder. The prohibition may come from law, such as the Privacy Act, or from regulation such as title 29, Code of Federal Regulations. An example of a prohibited document is any document that includes information that can be used to identify an individuals' race and national origin.

Occasionally documents filed in the personnel folder are rescinded. When filing requirements are rescinded, the document(s) should no longer be filed on the right side of the personnel folder. A list of rescinded forms follows the information on obsolete forms.

Some forms may become obsolete because of legislative or procedural changes in the Federal human resource programs. The obsolete form may be replaced by other forms or documents, or the entire process that created the forms may be discontinued. Even though the form is obsolete, the reason for keeping the form as a part of the employee's history may still exist. The form may still be filed appropriately as a long-term document in the personnel folder. A list of obsolete forms authorized for long-term retention follows the information on right side and left side document filing.

Right Side Documents

- Application/Resume submitted for the Federal appointment or the re-appointment that allows for the continuation of the Federal benefits. Note: Position changes, in the same agency are not considered a new appointment.
- Attachments to applications requested in the job announcement and items that refer to basic qualifications, e.g. School Transcripts.
- Verification of Benefits and Civilian Service History, i.e. Request for Preliminary Employment Data.
- Records that document military service creditable for retirement, e.g. DD 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, and National Guard Bureau and Reserve reports of separation and records of service.
- Documentation of creditable service for retirement, e.g. Proof of creditable volunteer service with the Peace Corps or Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).
- SF 2809, Health Benefits Registration Form, and related statements, e.g. foster child status, medical documentation used to make a self-support determination for a child over 22 years of age or over, and statements supporting acceptance of a late registration. Note: Medical certificates and documents should be placed in a sealed envelope before being attached to any enrollment forms.
- SF 2810, Notice of Change in Health Benefits, including any authorized attachments, e.g. employee's election to terminate benefits during a period of nonpay status or insufficient pay.
- Memorandum, letters, or other Office of Personnel Management approved documentation of health benefits enrollments or changes used in lieu of the SF 2810.
- Notice of eligibility for temporary continuation of health benefits coverage (signed copy or file copy with deliver receipt attached).
- Life insurance forms unless the form specifies that the form should be filed on the left side or that the form is not to be filed in the personnel folder.
- RI 20 97, Estimated earnings during Military Service.
- OPM 1515, Military Service Deposit Election.
- OPM 1514, Military Deposit Worksheet.
- SF 3102, Federal Employees Retirement System Designation of Beneficiary, including authorized attachments, i.e. trustee designation. Note: This form is sent to the Office of Personnel Management when the employee leaves.
- Notice of Approval of Disability Retirement Application.
- SF 3109 (formerly OPM Form 155), Election of Coverage, and any approved attachments, i.e., authorization for retroactive election.
- SF 3110 (formerly OPM Form 1556), Former spouse's Consent to Federal Employees Retirement System Election.
- SF 3111 (formerly OPM 1560}, Request for Waiver, Extension or Search in Connection with Election of Federal Employees Retirement System, and any authorized attachments.
- SF2801-1, Certified Summary of Federal Service (Civil Service Retirement System).
- SF 3107-1, Certified Summary of Federal Service (Federal Employees Retirement System).
- TSP 1, Thrift Savings Plan Election Form.
- TSP 967-AO, Notice that Employee Contributions Cannot Be Made Because a Financial Hardship In-Service Withdrawal Has Been Issued.
- Transcript of thrift savings plan changes approved by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.
- SF 85, Data for Non-Sensitive or Noncritical Sensitive Positions, dated prior to 4/1/1990 that contain the words "Stamped EO 10450."

Left Side Documents

The left side of the personnel folder is used for temporary documents: Program guidance requires that certain documents be filed on the left side of the personnel folder. Agencies may choose to file other material on the left side of the folder as long as:

1. The document related to the individual who is the subject of the folder (general documentation of personnel operations is not appropriate for filing in the personnel folder.);
2. The document is a personnel record (travel, payroll, and financial disclosure records are not personnel records);
3. Office of Personnel Management guidance does not prohibit filing the document in the folder (see the list of prohibited documents);
4. Other guidance does not require the material be filed in separate files, e.g. documentation of health benefits enrollments under temporary continuation of coverage.

List of documents that are filed on the left side:

- Position Descriptions
- SF 1152, Designation of Beneficiary for Unpaid Compensation
- Letters of reprimand or caution
- Documentation that the employee is indebted to the health benefits fund, including election to continue coverage and the amount owed
- Life insurance forms that specifically state that the form is to be filed on the left side of the personnel folder. Note: Most life insurance forms are filed on the right side of the personnel folder
- SF 2803, Application to Make Deposit or Redeposit to the Civil Service Retirement System
- SF 3108, Application to Make Service Credit Payment for Civilian Service for the Federal Employees Retirement System

Examples of temporary documents that are transferred with the personnel folder:

- Performance information
- Notice of employee indebtedness to the health benefits fund
- Records of leave data when the leave can be transferred is transferable

Prohibited Documents

- Reference checks and pre-employment inquiries
- Award justification and other reference material
- SF 2802, Application for Refund of Retirement Deductions
- SF 2804, Application to Make voluntary Contributions
- SF 2806 and 3100, Individual Retirement Records
- Correspondence dealing with a payment, refund from, or repayment to the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System
- SF 85, Data for Non-Sensitive or Noncritical Sensitive Positions, dated after 4/1/1990
- SF 85-P, Data for Public Trust Positions; SF 86, Security Investigation Data for Sensitive Positions; and SF 87, Fingerprint Chart